



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

SOUTHERN AFRICA

IMPROVING INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF SHARED RIVER BASINS

December 2005



THE CHALLENGE

Water scarcity in Southern Africa is a growing concern. Population growth and associated demands for domestic, farm, and industrial use are increasing stress on limited water resources. Seventy percent of the region's watersheds are shared between two or more countries. What happens upstream affects the people, wildlife and ecosystems downstream. This can't be managed solely at the national level. It requires a regional response.

USAID PROGRAM

USAID's regional environmental program in Southern Africa focuses on improving management of shared river basins, starting with the Okavango. USAID consulted with the Okavango River Basin Commission and river basin stakeholders, non-governmental organizations and other donors in the design of an Improved River Basin Management (IRBM) activity in 2004. Through the IRBM activity, USAID is combining efforts with other donors, primarily the UNDP-Global Environment Facility (UNDP-GEF) and the Swedish international development agency (SIDA), in the following areas.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

USAID is strengthening the Okavango River Basin Commission (OKACOM) to help it carry out its mandate to facilitate fair and sustainable management of water resources. The three countries that share the river basin, i.e., Angola, Botswana and Namibia, have competing uses for the water. OKACOM is their platform for dialogue, assessment and recommendations to national governments.

USAID is supporting OKACOM's initiatives for institutional development through actions such as:

- improving systems for communication and follow-up,
- providing key Secretariat services in the interim before an official Secretariat is operational,
- building capacity for river basin management,
- developing the means to finance OKACOM operations, and
- resolving priority technical and policy issues within the OKACOM framework.

Regional Center for Southern Africa

Plot 14818 Lebatlane Road
P.O. Box 2427
Gaborone, Botswana

Tel: +267 363 1200
Fax: +267 392 4404
<http://rcsa.usaid.gov>

IMPROVED INFORMATION

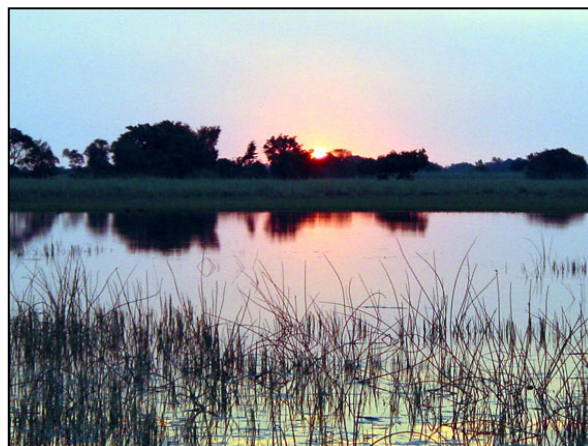
OKACOM and national water institutions need better information to guide planning, analysis and policy development and to foment consensus building. Angola, for example, lacks data on water flow in the upper watershed of the Okavango River. This information gap affects the ability of analysts to develop appropriate plans for water use and allocation downstream.

USAID is working in close collaboration with UNDP-GEF to help OKACOM establish systems for data collection and analysis. Planned activities include the following:

- Improve information management through the development of an OKACOM data hub
- Improve the ability to monitor water flow and quality, starting with the reestablishment of measuring stations in Angola
- Develop a framework for assessing key policies and legislation
- Integrate projects into a basin-wide program
- Identify ecologically sensitive areas in the basin and assess their conservation, research, and management needs

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

USAID promotes community participation in decision-making on river basin issues and supports more sustainable natural resource management practices. The purpose of working at the community level is to strengthen linkages between the local stakeholders and the regional/national river basin institutions. USAID provides selected communities in the river basin with tools and techniques to protect the ecological resource base upon which their livelihoods depend.



PARTNERS

- OKACOM and its Steering Committee
- Associates in Rural Development (ARD) Inc. (Implementing Partner)

USAID is working on this activity in close collaboration with the following additional development partners and projects:

- GEF Basin Management Project (UNDP Global Environment Facility)
- Every River Has Its People Project — Kalahari Conservation Society
- Namibian Nature Foundation
- SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency)
- USAID Missions in Angola and Namibia